WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for operating a networked group of elements, comprising the steps of:

a) providing at least one of the elements on a network with instructions that are located in the element; and

b) copying at least some of said instructions to a proxy that is intermediate the elements and the network.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions comprise information for the integration of the element into the network.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions comprise information for driving an interface.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions comprise information for driving an interface and for the integration of the element into the network.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the proxy has sockets to which the elements are connected, and the proxy polls the sockets to determine the presence of elements that contain new information.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein if the proxy determines the presence of an element that contains new information, that new information is copied to the proxy.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the proxy interrogates an element to determine its device type.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the proxy interrogates an element to determine its device iteration.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the proxy interrogates an element and determines whether it contains new code.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the proxy determines whether the code is new by comparing at least a portion of it to existing code located on the proxy.

11. The method of claim 9, wherein the if new code is found, the proxy copies a sub-agent from the element to the proxy.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the sub-agent is written to execute within the proxy.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the sub-agent does not execute within the element.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the sub-agent contains all the code necessary

to translate commands from the network to the element, retrieve a response from the element, and transmit a response back from the element to the network.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the sub-agent monitors the element.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein the sub-agent detects the presence of alarm conditions.

17. The method of claim 16, whereupon detection of an alarm condition, the proxy forwards notice of an alarm condition to the network.

18. The method of claim 10, wherein if new code is found, the proxy copies files necessary for the control of the element from the device to the proxy.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein these files comprise code to generate menus for the operation of a user interface.

20. The method of claim 9, wherein if new code is found, the proxy copies a sub-agent and code for use by a user interface to the proxy.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein the element has memory sufficient to store at least two versions of instructions.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions are provided in the form of firmware.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions are provided in the form of software.

24. A method for managing a networked group of elements, comprising the steps of:

a) providing the elements with instructions that are located in the element; and

b) copying at least some of said instructions to a proxy that is intermediate the elements and the network.

25. The method of claim 24, wherein the proxy detects all of the elements on the network that it manages.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein after detecting an element, the proxy interrogates the element.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein if an element having new code is detected, the element transfers code from the element to the proxy.

28. The method of claim 24, wherein a sub-agent provided on the element is used

by the proxy to monitor the element.

2 9. A computer network for controlling elements linked via the network, comprising:

a network proxy;

a plurality of elements;

code located on said elements, said code enabling a network to utilize said elements and executable on the network proxy.

30. A computer network for controlling elements linked via the network, comprising:

a network proxy;

a plurality of elements;

a sub-agent provided by said plurality of elements, said subagent enabling a network to utilize said elements.

31. A computer network as set forth in claim 30, further comprising a menu agent located on the elements for enabling an operator to interface with the element.